

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning AB 2917 without my signature.

Since the days of Governor Hiram Johnson, the initiative, the referendum and the recall have been used by the people of California to dramatically alter the destiny of the state. At the very heart of the initiative process is the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the core value of political speech. Any burden placed on either of these fundamental rights of Californians must be examined through a lens that favors the right of the people to address grievances with the government through initiatives, referendums, and recalls.

Current law makes it a misdemeanor to intentionally misrepresent the contents of any state or local initiative, referendum, or recall petition. No one has been prosecuted under this provision since 1994. This bill makes only a slight change to the standard a prosecutor can use to prosecute an individual who makes a false statement or misrepresentation when circulating petitions and subjects them to higher penalties. It is hard to discern whether this bill is intended to address a serious problem with the signature gathering process or to make signature gathering efforts more difficult to thwart the initiative power.

I believe in the power of the people of California and I will continue to take my ideas to them through the initiative process. I will not support any measure that places additional burden on the power of the people absent a compelling reason.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger